



A cable car, seen against the skyscrapers of Chongqing, carries passengers over the Chang Jiang.



MEET LANG

Lang lives in a city of 10 million people and attends one of China's best middle schools. Here, he stands outside a shop in his neighborhood.

lution. The movement was partly meant to correct economic imbalances. But it was largely a way for Mao and his allies to seize more power. A series of attacks on people considered to be Mao's enemies resulted in a reign of terror. Many of those attacked were China's best-educated people. The Cultural Revolution created problems for the Chinese that continue to this day.

Economic Reforms

For many years, China was closed to outsiders, who thought of it as a strange and forbidding place. But after Mao's death in 1976, China's leaders began to reform the economy. They encouraged foreign companies to set up factories in China. They also returned land to farmers.

These changes led to rapid economic growth. Billions of dollars have been invested in China, and production rates have soared. Today, high-rise buildings, superhighways, and other ambitious projects are under construction across the country.

The people of China can increasingly afford cars and other goods. Between 1990 and 2005, U.S. exports to China grew by 415 percent.

A Communist Government

Although the government has reshaped China's economy, it has done little to reform the political system. Citizens cannot elect national leaders. Chinese President Hu Jintao (*hoo jihn-taow*), for example, was chosen by the Communist Party.

Nonetheless, Hu is an important world leader. The United States government wants China's help in persuading North Korea not to build nuclear weapons. The U.S. also wants to keep peace between China and Taiwan. In 1949, Chinese leaders fled from Communist rule and set up their own government on the island of Taiwan. Since then, Taiwan's status has been a matter of international debate.

The U.S. and China have a troubled trading relationship. The value of the goods the U.S. imports from China is greater than that of the goods the U.S. exports there. To make up for this large **trade deficit**, the U.S. has borrowed billions of dollars from China.

U.S. officials want China to allow more democracy and personal freedoms, but they have to maintain good relations with Hu. A lot is at stake.

The Next Generation

To Min and Lang, the Chinese government seems remote. They are more focused on schoolwork. In her spare time, Min likes to ice skate at a new rink in a nearby city. Both teens enjoy watching Chinese star Yao Ming play basketball for the Houston Rockets.

Min wants to become a translator when she grows up, and travel around the world. She believes that all of her studying will pay off. "When I work hard," she says, "I'm happy. I believe I will have a good future." **JS**

Your Turn

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What are some of the reasons that Min and Lang study so hard?
2. The U.S. trade deficit with China is nearly \$18 billion. What consequences might such an imbalance have for both countries in the future?